

more good stuff

A GATHERING OF SPIRIT

*Writing and Art by North American
Indian Women*

Edited by Beth Brant
(Degonwadonti)

Not long now

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To every Indian woman who wrote, who sent in her work, who enriched my life with incredible images and language. Who gave spirit, who gave a past *and* a future. **Kunorúhkwa.**

FOR

Anna Mae Aquash (Micmac)

Born in Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia, in 1945.

Activist, freedom fighter, mother.

Died in Wanblee, South Dakota, in 1976.

Raped, shot in the head, thrown down an embankment.

During the time between her autopsy and the release of her body to her family, her hands were cut off and never recovered. She was a casualty of the war between the FBI and the Indian People.

Saralinda Grimes (Cherokee)

Born in 1957.

Lesbian, resister, organizer.

Died in Tilden Park, Berkeley, California, in 1976,

from an overdose of morphine and codeine. She was a casualty of the war against women, against gays, against the Indian People.

AND

All Indian women who have survived these wars and live to tell the tales.

Amber Coverdale Sumrall

Owl Woman

Fire wings soar into forest depths
glazed with moonspill
there are no illusions here
fogwebs hide the source of magic.
Listen to the silence
as it echoes around you,
ancient spirits dance in it.
Take heed
guard your secrets
bury your treasures well,
your knives, your crystals,
your feathers and shells . . .
All your sacred things.
Like ancestors bones
they will be stolen,
pulverized into
instant powder to feed
white men's souls.

Terri Meyette

Trading Post – Winslow, Arizona

Momma said I had eyes like a hawk.
Dust, red earthen clay clings
to emerald green velveteen skirts,
flashing opposites
as they quietly sway past a tiny face.
Silver and turquoise slides from a wrinkled wrist,
crosses the counter to meet its fate
a pawn ticket.
Voices grunt and haggle price,
two bags of flour appear in exchange.
Faces wrinkled and worn
like ancient ruins,
browned like fry bread
parade into the trading post.
Tourists with knobby knees white socks
and black leather shoes parade out.
Cameras around smog-soaked necks
dead pawn in their white clutches;
they buy history in a blanket,
family traditions in a squash-blossom necklace
the old lady walks home
with two bags of flour.

Celebration 1982

They say no one died.
Tiny desert flower
micro beetle bug
are they not life?
Their bag of bones
blown into the wind
captured in white dust storms
washed down polluted rivers
are they not dead?

They say no one died.
Scientist, unconscious
mushroom button pushers,
Secretary of Defense what's his name,
President what's his name
when will they be tried
for imposing fantasies and celebrations
on all life forms?

It wasn't enough
in "45"
Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

They say no one died.
Nevada desert
1000 miles into her bowels
earth melted.

radiation, radiation, radiation,
radiation.

oozed into blood
of Shoshone and Paiute.
The bomb lasted minutes
the intent lasts generations
in the womb of Creation, herself.

They say no one died.
Closing their eye,
they dismissed death
dismissed life
became blinded
by white flash
their God.

They say no one died.
As thousands of beetles
fell through the sky
and rabbit hair turned into
fur coats protecting atoms
as they floated into water.
They won't look
they will just say
no one died.

Alice Bowen

Circumstance

sweet, sweet wine
make me forget
the decay of heart
that raped the land
killed our intimate friends

sweet, red wine
cherished warmth
making existence bearable
on this once
beautiful land

cheap, sour wine
comfort
console me
I stand stripped
of dignity,
and wise, old ways

Geraldine Keams

Canyon Day Woman Blues

Woman VII (Ester)

Alcohol Counselor,
Indian Woman,
Mother.
Married to an alcoholic,
Indian man
Father of two.
Mother wants out.
He feels sorrowful,
Tired.
She feels defeated.
She sees the sadness in
the young son's eyes . . .
"Mommy, I'm hungry."
She sees a small beam
of light.
Suddenly realizes, her husband
will never change.
Can't babysit a grownup
man no more!
"I'm leaving him!"
Confidently, positively,
She smiles.
A feeling she hasn't had
in a long time.
I listen to Ester.
I think,
Right on;
Navajo woman,
Right on!

Tremolo

A woman is making the tremolo into the wind
No longer is it the song she once made
For her husband and sons in battle
Now
She sings it for herself
This woman is a strong woman
Her face is etched in lines
That have not yet made an ending
In another time she would be called "man-hearted"
But now she has turned her back to the wind
and the four winds take her cry and carry
it to the four directions, to all-women
And her tremolo is a new song
She sings in a voice of rolling thunder
Saying,
Listen, women! The new word for *strong*
is "*Woman-hearted!*"

A Native Woman – 1982

Living in the air
Landless
I pretend the floor
Is ground.

The only earth I visit
Is the dump
Asking Mother to forgive
My trash upon her face.

Time in its metered regularity is irregular
I do nothing that is natural
I have even taken the moon's control from my blood
My children are strangers
My family is back "home"

I am alone—
Landless
9 to 5
driven by bills to pay,
and a car to feed.

I am a Native Woman
I have that much
It's more than most
I am not ignorant
I know what life should be.

